

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

Remarks Honoring the 2011 Super Bowl Champion Green Bay Packers
August 12, 2011

The President. Hello, everybody. Everybody have a seat. On this spectacular day, I want to welcome everybody to the White House. Thank you all for being here.

I'm just going to come out and say it: This hurts a little bit. *[Laughter]* This is a hard thing for a Bears fan to do. It doesn't hurt as much as the NFC Championship Game hurt—*[laughter]*—but it still hurts, you guys coming to my house to rub it in. *[Laughter]* What are you going to do, go to Ditka's house next or—*[laughter]*.

But in the interest of good sportsmanship, congratulations to the Green Bay Packers on your 4th Super Bowl championship and record 13th NFL championship.

Oh, you know, the problem you have, though, in your franchise—your fans are not that enthusiastic. *[Laughter]* You guys have got to work on that. I'm surprised they're not wearing cheeseheads. Oh, there they are. *[Laughter]* All right, my mistake. *[Laughter]*

Look, obviously, it's good to have football right around the corner. Like every football fan, I was thrilled to have the lockout ended. Nobody likes long, frustrating negotiations—*[laughter]*—with a rigid opposition, taking it to the brink. *[Laughter]*

I want to recognize Packers President Mark Murphy, GM Ted Thompson, for the outstanding job they've done, as well as Coach Mike McCarthy for guiding them to the next championship.

And I would like to welcome all the players to the White House; some of them I've had a chance to meet before, wonderful guys. I guess I especially have to welcome Charles Woodson. Where's Woodson?

[At this point, cornerback Charles Woodson approached the podium.]

The President. See—hold on a second. I wasn't asking for some certificate you're about to give me, aren't you? *[Laughter]* He's really rubbing it in. Look at that.

Now, look, I admit Woodson is a pretty good ballplayer. And for those who don't know, I gave Charles a little bulletin board material, apparently, last year. And so after the Packers beat the Bears, Charles addressed the team—everybody on ESPN saw it. I saw it while I was working out in the morning—and Charles said, "If the President doesn't want to come to watch us at the Super Bowl, then we're going to him."

Then I flew to Green Bay later that week to visit a local company, and Governor Walker and Mayor Schmitt—where's Mayor Schmitt? There he is right there. He gave me a jersey from Charles on which he'd written, "See you at the White House." *[Laughter]* So basically, Charles has been giving me a hard time now for several months.

Charles, you're a man of your word. And I've now learned something that every NFL quarterback already knows too well: Don't mess with Charles Woodson.

Now, in the Super Bowl, the Packers showed just what a championship team is made of and that you deserved those rings Coach McCarthy had you fitted on the night before. The game was a lot like your season. Some key players went down with injuries in the first half,

including Donald and Charles. But everybody stepped up. Your offense exploded behind one of the greatest performances by a quarterback in a Super Bowl. Where's Aaron?

Your defense was flying all over the place like Clay Matthews's hair. Where's Clay? There he is. And you brought the Lombardi Trophy back home.

Aaron earned the game's MVP award: 304 yards, three touchdowns, no interceptions. This was a performance that capped off an incredible playoff run that proved he's not just one of the best quarterbacks in the game, he's one of the best quarterbacks perhaps of all time. And I know that he's going to be having an extraordinary career going forward.

We also know that the Packers are made of more than one player or one season. They're made of the people of Green Bay. Back in the twenties, fans passed the hat at the games to support the team. In 1923, after some rough financial years, local businessmen banded together to pay the bills. Two more times—in 1935 and 1950—the community came to the rescue to keep the club afloat, and today, a hundred and twelve thousand people own a piece of this franchise. It is the only publicly owned team in pro sports, so—[*applause*]. And after the Super Bowl, hundreds of those fans woke up the next day, put on their snow boots, and headed over to Lambeau Field to shovel it out for the victory pep rally.

That support goes both ways. The Packers have raised more than \$4 million for charities in communities all across Wisconsin and Michigan. More than 300 schools participate in the Packers Fit Kids program to promote childhood health. They've given scholarships to local students, sponsored food and blood drives, found creative ways to support our troops and their families.

So even a Bears fan can admit that the relationship between Green Bay and its team is something special. It reflects those old-school, small-town values of community and hard work that have always defined what it meant to be an American. And Super Bowl spotlight or not, that's something that's alive in towns across this country every single day.

So to all the Green Bay Packers, to all the fans, congratulations. Enjoy it while it lasts. [*Laughter*] Because Bears fans have two dates circled on our calendars: September 25 and Sunday Night Football on Christmas Day. And if you guys are on a roll by then, just keep in mind that there's only one place—one person here who can ground all planes in and out of Green Bay—[*laughter*—if he has to.

So congratulations.

Charles, what do you got here? You can step up to the mike.

Mr. Woodson. Well, on behalf of the Green Bay Packers organization and all the players, we would like to present you with this. Of course, all the fans own the team, and it hurts us a little bit to give you this as well—[*Laughter*—but to give you shares of the Green Bay Packers.

[*The President was presented with a framed share of stock.*]

The President. Man, that is outstanding. The—well, if I'm a part owner, I think—[*laughter*].

Coach Mike McCarthy. We figured this is the only way we could get you away from the Bears. [*Laughter*]

The President. No, what I'm thinking is, I think we should initiate a trade to send Rodgers down to the Bears. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. Boo!

The President. What do you think? No? How about——

Mr. Woodson. A minority owner, thank you. [*Laughter*]

Coach McCarthy. Aaron, go ahead.

The President. All right, what else we got?

Quarterback Aaron Rodgers. On behalf of the team, we also want to give you the right colors to wear on those two dates you mentioned. [*Laughter*] We got you this jersey, right here.

[*The President was presented with a team jersey bearing the words "Commander in Chief."*]

The President. All right, man. Thank you. Commander in Chief.

Mr. Rodgers. Why don't you change into that right now?

The President. Thank you. Good to see you, man. Absolutely.

All right. Let's get a good picture. They're going to break this down.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:57 p.m. on the South Portico at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Michael K. Ditka, former head coach, Chicago Bears; Mayor James J. Schmitt of Green Bay, WI; and Donald Driver, wide receiver, and Clay Matthews, linebacker, Green Bay Packers.

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